September 2007 Socio-economic Series 07-015

The Old Grace Hospital Site Charrette

INTRODUCTION

The Wolseley neighbourhood in Winnipeg underwent a comprehensive neighbourhood review and consultation process entitled the Wolseley Building Communities Initiative in 2003. This initiative identified a number of key neighbourhood projects and set out principles by which they and the neighbourhood should be developed. As the redevelopment of the Old Grace Hospital was perhaps the most significant of the identified projects it, in particular, was designated for further discussion at a later date

The Old Grace Hospital is located in the heart of the Wolseley neighbourhood. The building was used as a hospital until 1967, when the new Grace Hospital opened elsewhere in Winnipeg. The old building was sold to the Manitoba government in 1971 and has been used for office space by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, even though it was declared surplus in 2004.

In 2003, Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation (MHRC) commissioned an assessment of the building to determine whether it was feasible for conversion to affordable housing. At that time, James Kacki Architects were contracted to undertake an Affordable Housing Feasibility Study, which was completed in 2004.

Residents living close to the site expressed the strongest concern about the future of the Old Grace and asked for funding for a community consultation process related specifically to it. The purpose of this community consultation was to identify viable options that would be compatible with the existing neighbourhood and comply with the development guidelines which were developed during the Building Communities Initiative for the whole neighbourhood. Funding for this was granted to the Wolseley Residents Association by the province and administered by the Neighbours of Old Grace (NOOG).

Figure 1 Charrette work groups during breakout sessions

Figure 2 The children's team, guided by artist from Winnipeg's Art City

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HOME TO CANADIANS

The Old Grace Hospital Community Consultation involved the entire community. The Wolseley community believes the future of the site affects the well-being of the entire neighbourhood, which must be involved in decisions about the site.

Consultation was through a neighbourhood survey in the spring of 2006 and a CMHC-funded community charrette in October 2006. The survey and an invitation to the charrette were sent to 2,300 residences as well as all businesses in Wolseley and 146 replies were received. Responses indicated an almost even split of opinion between demolishing and renovating the existing building and thus the charrette presented an excellent forum to explore the possibilites and impacts for each approach.

BACKGROUND

The principles for project development as set out in the Wolseley Building Communities Initiative are:

- Strengthen, maintain and improve Wolseley's distinctive neighbourhood character as defined by the values, such as:
  - heritage–architecture,
  - arts and culture,
  - environmental responsibility,
  - diversity and inclusion,
  - unique local business community.
- Promote traffic calming.
- Improve conditions to promote walking, biking and public transit.
- Promote a safe and accessible neighbourhood.
- Improve physical conditions for recreation and play activities.
- Promote community use of outdoor spaces.
- Expand, create and integrate public art into the community.
- Improve environmental conditions and features of the neighbourhood, such as:
  - parks,
  - greenspaces,
  - waterways.

The charrette used these principles as a basis for determining solutions for the Old Grace.

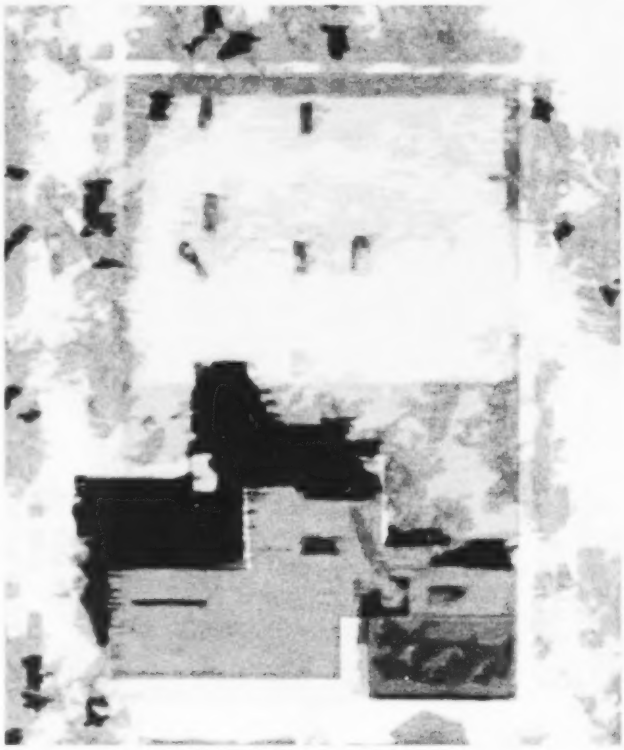

Figure 3 Existing Old Grace Hospital site

CHARRETTE PLANNING AND OBJECTIVES

Planning for the charrette began in spring of 2006. Before that, the Neighbours of Old Grace committee of the Wolseley Residents Association obtained funding from the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation for consultation about the community's interest in the future of the property. That process allowed for background information and research on other models, as well as a survey distributed throughout the neighbourhood.

The purpose of the charrette was to engage the community more fully in the process of understanding options and to continue the dialogue to the point where a community based vision for the site could be established. It was not the intention of the charrette to create a final design solultion for the property

Figure 4 Presentations were used to inform the charrette process

The charrette involved participation of community residents, who worked with specialists from various disciplines and with each other examining development options and preliminary conceptual planning for the Old Grace Hospital site.

THE CHARRETTE

The charrette took place over a weekend and involved information and workshop sessions. Up to 40 participants engaged in a round table discussion that considered the various options, discussed pros and cons related to keeping the building or demolishing it and envisioned future uses and possibilities for the site.

The charrette focused on:

- developing feasible options for the re-use of the site and building that would be sympathetic with the Wolseley Neighbourhood guiding principles, in harmony with the character of the neighbourhood and support the principles of sustainability;
- engaging community members in this process;
- providing examples of similar sites that have been developed within other neighbourhoods in Canada;
- bringing together politicians, city administrators, developers and other stakeholders to engage in productive dialogue.

PARTICIPANTS

All residents and businesses within the Wolseley neighbourhood were invited to participate in the charrette. Many of the participants live very close to the Old Grace Hospital site, but there were also participants from the greater Wolseley area, representatives from the province, the City of Winnipeg and students and faculty from the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Architecture.

PRESENTATIONS

There were presentations by experts to inform charrette participants about possible options.

Round table discussions began on the second day of the charrette, after the participants had received enough information to be able to examine the issues with some knowledge about the Old Grace and future possibilities.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The following principles were developed through group discussion and are a synthesis of those identified by each of the work groups. They also reflect the responses from the neighbourhood survey.

- The Wolseley community views this property as a key component of the neighbourhood and the residents as key stakeholders. Any development that takes place must occur with the ongoing participation of the neighbourhood in decision-making.
- Responsible re-use of this property is essential to the well being of the community.
- Preferred development will have a social component that has the potential to serve the community.
- Consideration should be given to encouraging private-public development consortiums, such as artist live–work spaces, housing co-operatives and so on.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The charrette identified the following design principles for development:

- Building design should be compatible with the existing Victorian and Queen Anne building styles predominant in the Wolseley neighbourhood.
- The site development should incorporate gardens and green space that complement the essential spirit of Wolseley as a garden community
- Sustainable building practices should be an integral part of design development.

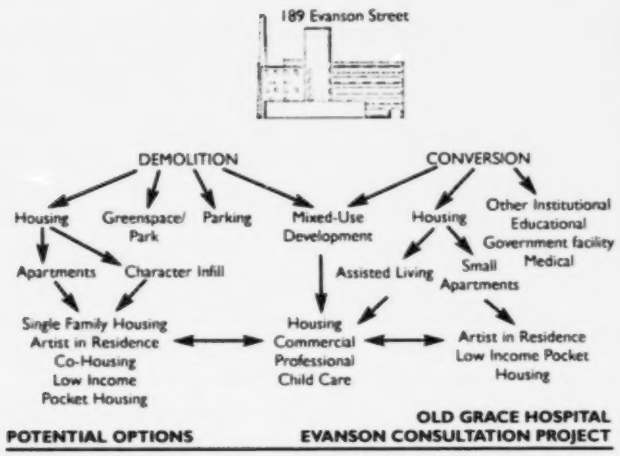

Figure 5 Development options diagram[1]

Developments that were cited as models that exemplify the identified design goals include Mole Hill Housing in Vancouver and the Bain Co-op in Toronto.

The following criteria for development generally reflect the opinion of the Wolseley community as represented by the charrette participants and respondents to the neighbourhood survey:

- Housing is preferred as the primary use for this property.
- Sustainable building practices should be incorporated into any development.
- Building heights and density must be compatible with existing neighbourhood conditions.

The charrette envisioned opportunities to develop the Old Grace property as a model that embodies the goals and principles of great place-making and community development in the Wolseley neighbourhood.

- Mixed-use development is strongly encouraged. This would include community-based facilities, such as day care, community gathering spaces, laundry facilities and so on.

Figure 6 An idea from the children's team: a laughing tower (old chimney retained, laugh into opening at base so whole neighbourhood can hear)

- Housing would be the development. There should be opportunities for a blend of housing types to enable young families, single-parent families and students to live in the development. There would be a strong emphasis on seniors. Affordable housing is acceptable within this context.
- The original structures would be reused, intact or disassembled, and salvaged materials would be reused.

[1] "Pocket Housing" is a concept developed in Winnipeg to describe low-income housing on narrow infill lots. Each Pocket House has three barrier-free suites and one fully accessible suite on the main floor and four suites on the second floor accessible by two outside staircases. All units have separate entrances and private washrooms. Each of the furnished suites has a cooking area with a mini-fridge, microwave, sink and hot plate. The Pocket Houses offer an alternative to rooming houses for low-income single people. For more information about Pocket Houses, go to http://www.sam.mb.ca/pockethouses/index.html. English only, retrieved August, 2007.

- Sustainable building practices would be integral to the redevelopment.
- Any new building would be compatible and architecturally complementary with other building styles in the neighbourhood.
- All parking requirements would be accommodated within the property, with a preference for parking structures that would be underground and architecturally integrated.
- Greenspaces, gardens and community gathering spaces would be incorporated into the development.
- Children's play spaces would be accommodated within the property.

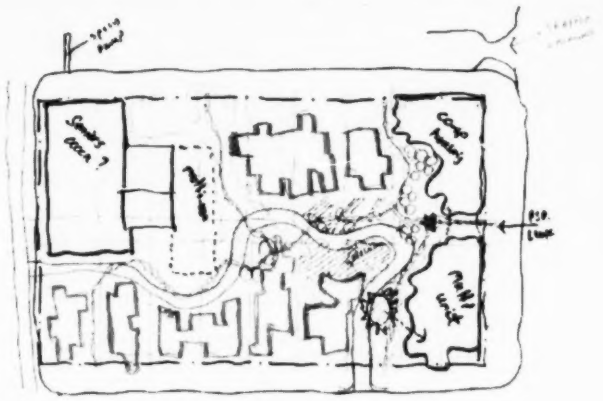

Figure 7 Group 3 site plan sketch

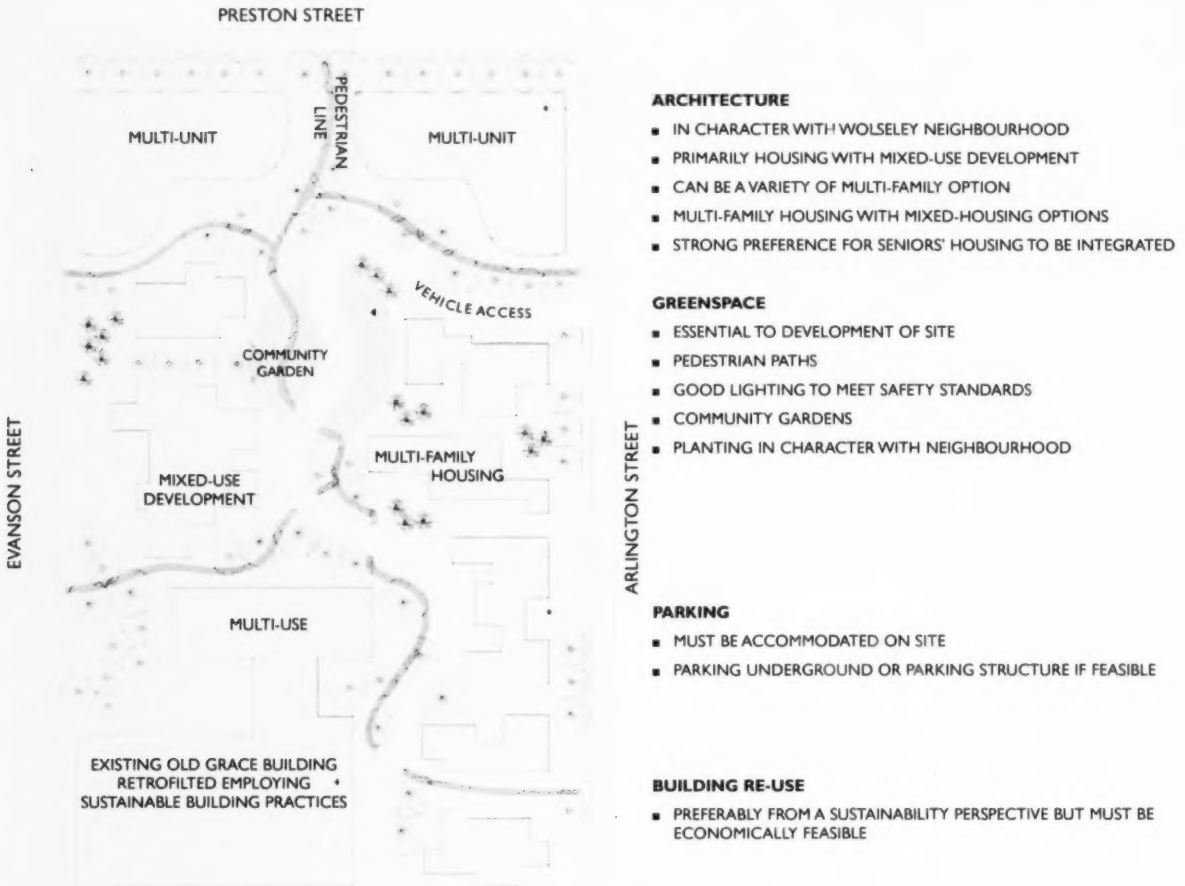

Figure 8 Resulting site plan

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The Wolseley neighbourhood believes that the appropriate development of the Old Grace property is essential to the well-being of the neighbourhood. Community consultation has been an essential step toward moving the development process forward. Ongoing communication is essential to the achievement of a development plan that is mutually satisfactory to the future developers, the City of Winnipeg and the Wolseley neighbourhood.

The charrette's suggested next steps are:

- Request for Proposals (RFP), to be prepared with the input of the Wolseley community.
- The RFP should incorporate the guidelines and criteria in this report.
- The RFP may be written to encourage public-private partnerships, to allow for co-operatives or other models of development.

The report on the Old Grace Hospital Site Reuse Community Consultation contains detailed information on the Charrette as well as background information and research prepared for the charrette.

You can find it on the consultant's website
http://www.htfc.mb.ca/oghcp.html

PRESENTERS

The following made presentations to the group.

James Kacki, James Kacki Architect and Planner Inc.

Carol Phillips, Executive Director of the Winnipeg Arts Council

Doug Pollard, CMHC Senior Researcher in Sustainable Communities

Rodney McDonald, McDonald and Hardess Sustainability Group

Paul McNeil, ND Lea Inc

Patty Malone, SAM Management

CMHC Project Manager: Doug Pollard

Consultant: Thomas, Hilderman, Frank, Cram

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